

VZCZCXYZ0001
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #2466/01 2832247
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 102247Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5428
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6053
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 2078
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT 0136
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 1028
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 002466

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

PLEASE PASS ALSO TO USOAS AND USAID/LAC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/27/2016

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: LATEST POLLS SHOW CORREA WEAKENING, NOBOA RISING

REF: A. QUITO 2450

[1](#)B. QUITO 2455

Classified By: PolOff Erik Martini for reasons 1.4 (B&D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In two credible polls conducted October 7-8, after the recent presidential debate, Correa still leads by a wide margin, but falls short of a first-round victory and shows a slight drop in support after weeks of consistent positive momentum. Alvaro Noboa continued his late surge, and is now tied or leading for second place, along side Leon Roldos. One poll which sampled the Amazon region for the first time showed Gilmar Gutierrez beginning to contend with Cynthia Viteri for fourth place. With more than 30% still undecided, there could be surprises. But a second round match-up between Correa and Noboa is the best bet as of today. End Summary.

Noboa Rising

[1](#)2. (SBU) Although polls are no longer published in the media, Embassy has obtained recent results from two of the three major polling firms, Cedatos and Informe Confidencial. Both polls show Noboa surging into contention for second place. Informe Confidencial records the first drop in Correa's numbers, from 27% last week to 24% this week. This is the first time Correa has dropped since early August. Current poll results, both within +/- 3% margin of error and unadjusted to reflect valid votes (Cedatos, "Informe Confidencial"):

-- Rafael Correa (29.8%, 24%)
-- Alvaro Noboa (16.8%, 19%)
-- Leon Roldos (16.9%, 16%)
-- Cynthia Viteri (9.5%, 9%)
-- Gilmar Gutierrez (5.5%, 9%)
-- Undecideds: (32.5%, 32%)

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Cedatos poll showed a slight drop from 35.2% to 34.4% in Correa's numbers when only valid votes were calculated (i.e. subtracting blank and null votes from the analysis, as will be done on election day). Informe Confidencial reported a substantial drop from 35% to 30% in valid votes for Correa. Noboa registered an increase in valid votes from 17.6% to 19.4% in the Cedatos poll and 21% to 23% in the Informe Confidencial poll. Roldos continued to slide in this category, as in others, going from 20.3% to 19.5% and 22% to 19% in Cedatos and Informe Confidencial, respectively.

¶4. (SBU) We discount current projections of second round matchups at this stage, but they show Correa winning against all potential foes. The latest Cedatos poll forecasts Correa beating Noboa in the second round by 46% to 30.7%. The previous week's numbers showed Correa winning by a larger margin of 48.2% to 24.2%. In contrast, Correa is still projected to beat Roldos by 43.1% to 33.3% in the second round, a result that is unchanged from last week.

Gilmar Gutierrez Bounce: Amazon Undercounted?

¶5. (SBU) Gilmar Gutierrez, brother of ex-president Lucio Gutierrez, is also registering a bounce in polls by both firms. Informe Confidencial told EmbOfs that they are widening their sample to take into account more voters from Gutierrez's home Amazon region, which boosted Gutierrez to 9%, from just 5% last week. In the last presidential election in 2002, polling firms were criticized for failing to account for rural voters, and Lucio Gutierrez surprised everyone by winning a first round plurality. Cedatos' poll also registered Gutierrez' numbers rising to 5.5% this week from 4.5% last week. Cedatos' sample includes eligible voters in 17 of 22 provinces, but does not include four unspecified Amazon region provinces.

Many Ecuadorian Voters Still Evaluating Candidates

¶6. (C) Jaime Duran, director of the Informe Confidencial polling outfit and a respected political consultant, claims 30% of eligible voters would only decide who to vote for this week. More of these voters will decide based upon the candidates' images than on the substance of their proposals. The most recent Cedatos poll shows 32.5% of voters were still undecided. Commenting on a possible Noboa-Correa second round, Duran said Noboa may now have the advantage as the underdog, but his chances would depend on how large Correa's margin of victory in the first round. Anything more than 5% would be difficult for anyone to overcome. (note: Duran met with Noboa last week before the debate, and claims to have helped him sharpen his message.)

Comment

¶7. (C) Rather than moving toward Correa, as Roldos and Viteri have attempted, Noboa unabashedly presents the electorate with a right-of-center alternative. With Noboa rising and Roldos continuing his gradual decline, it looks increasingly likely that Noboa will again make it to the second round. In that scenario, Correa should gain the support of all the leftist parties, while the PSC is expected to back Noboa. One less clear key would be where Roldos and the ID choose to throw their support. Unless the margin between Noboa and Roldos widens significantly, a tight race for second place increases the possibility of post-electoral challenges (ref A).

¶8. (C) Correa continues to insist the polls show him winning in the first round (Roldos' claims the same for himself) and anything less than the required 40% support would be attributable to fraud. Correa's campaign has stumbled over the past week, defending the candidate against a variety of accusations and explaining Correa's statements on the FARC, President Bush, Chavez, and dollarization. Correa may also be suffering from front-runner syndrome -- he is no longer the underdog, he continues to boast of a first round win, and has gone as far as naming some of his cabinet choices (ref B).

¶9. (C) Despite the new "bounce," Gutierrez does not appear to be within striking distance of the second round--but that's what they said of brother Lucio in 2002.

JEWELL